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INFORMATION REPORT

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1. Before the war, Kali-Chemie, Berlin-Niederschönewoide, was one of the most important plants of the German potash products trust, Kali-Chemie, A.G., and housed the head offices of the combine. The plant was very badly damaged by air raids in 1944 and by shelling in 1945, and during the latter stages of the advance of the Red Army, the main offices were transferred to Sehnde, Hannover. Since the plant itself was in very poor condition, practically no dismantling was done by the Russians. It was not, however, totally destroyed.

2. Early in 1945 the power plant was put in order, and it was found that the sulphuric acid plant could be saved by sacrificing other parts. As a consequence, 600 tons of sulphur trioxide (SO_3) per month could be produced. Because of difficulties encountered in Berlin, stocks of pyrites were transferred to other plants which were already producing. In early 1946, however, production was begun with a six months' stockpile of supplies available. During the succeeding years the plant continued to operate under various difficulties, which could only have been overcome by complete reconstruction, particularly of the washer columns, the foundations of which had been badly damaged by outflowing acids. The original capacity of the plant amounted to 1,500 tons of SO_3 per month, of which 1,000 tons could be produced as fuming sulphuric acid with up to 27 per cent absorbed free SO_3. By sacrificing equipment for the production of fuming sulphuric acid, such as absorbing columns, an average monthly production of 600 tons of SO_3 was maintained, with short intervals for repairs, until 1948.

3. After 1948 the standard of repair work was raised, making it possible to put the contact ovens in order and charge them with new vanadium catalysts from Wolfen. As a result production steadily rose and at present averages 1,000 tons of SO_3 per month in the form of 96 per cent sulphuric acid.

4. The sulphuric acid plant is at present in a similiar condition to most of the plants in the SBZ. The plant suffers most from continuous personnel changes among its chemical engineers, most of whom have gone to the West. The engineer now in charge, Dr. Rattey, is not technically well-versed in the contact system. He originally worked in the fertilizer branch and later in the acid redemption section of explosive plants. It does not seem likely that he will be able to promote the production of SO_3 much beyond its present capacity even should he receive better support than his predecessors received in obtaining equipment.

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5. In addition to sulphur trioxide, the only other important item produced by Kali-Chemie, Berlin-Niederschöneweide, is potassium ferricyanide, production of which is dependent on delivery of potassium cyanide from Piesteritz. The production of potassium ferricyanide seldom averages more than 40-50 tons monthly, and most of that goes to Filmfabrik Wolfen.